

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 OMB-01 MCT-01 /080 W
-----129097 021148Z /72

P R 021035Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4009
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12724

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND COMIPAC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, CB, TH
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN ATTACK ON ARANYAPRATHET

SUMMARY: CAMBODIAN FORCES ATTACKED APRIL 29 NUMEROUS POINTS
ALONG THE THAI BORDER OF ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICT, INCLUDING
THE DISTRICT TWO. HEAVIEST HIT WAS THE POLICE OUTPOST AT
KLONG LUEK. ATTACK ON TOWN OF ARANYAPRATHET CAUSED SHOPS
TO CLOSE AND LARGE NUMBERS OF CITIZENS TO FLEE. PEOPLE RE-
TURNED, BUT THE TOWN REMAINED TENSE MAY 1. END SUMMARY.

1. CAMBODIAN FORCES APRIL 29 LAUNCHED MAJOR ATTACKS BY FIRE
AGAINST A NUMBER OF TOWN INCLUDING THE DISTRICT TOWN,
ARANYAPRATHET, IN PRACHINBURI PROVINCE. A CONCERTED ATTACK
BY ABOUT 60 MORTARS, "ROCKETS", AND GRENADES BEGAN ABOUT
1030 A.M. AGAINST BORDER VILLAGES OF BAN MAI SAENSUK, BAN
KLONG NAMSAI, BAN KOK SABANG, WANG MON AND THE POLICE
OUTPOST AT KLONG LUEK. AT APPROXIMATELY 1330 CAMBODIANS
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BEGAN A SERIES OF A DOZEN MORTAR THRUSTS AGAINST THE
DISTRICT TOWN OF ARANYAPRATHET, WOUNDING EIGHT CIVILIANS
AND THREE POLICEMEN. MORTARS HIT IN FRONT OF A LARGE,
CROWDED CINEMA AND THE ROOF OF THE AMNUAYSUK, ONE HOTEL.
SHOPS WERE IMMEDIATELY CLOSED AND LARGE NUMBERS OF PERSONS
TEMPORARILY FLED THE TOWN. VARIOUS REPORTS INDICATED THAT
TWO OR THREE CAMBODIAN SPOTTER PLANES CROSSED THE THAI

BORDER LATE IN THE DAY NEAR THE KLONG LUEK POLICE OUTPOST. PRESS REPORTED THAT THAIS RETALIATED AGAINST SUSPECTED POSITIONS INSIDE CAMBODIA WITH ARTILLERY AND PERHAPS AIRSTRIKES.

2. EMBOFFS VISITED ARANYAPRATHET MAY 1. THE TOWN WAS BUSTLING AGAIN AND MOST PEOPLE SEEMED TO HAVE RETURNED. HOWEVER, TENSION AND EXCITEMENT WERE STILL APPARENT. AN OFFICIAL IN THE DISTRICT CHIEF'S OFFICE TOLD US THAT A SECOND ATTACK WAS EXPECTED THAT DAY. NONE MATERIALIZED, AS FAR AS WE KNOW. FROM VARIOUS SOURCES WE HAVE HEARD THAT MORTARS OR "ROCKETS" RANGING FROM 75MM TO 107MM WERE EMPLOYED.

3. RTG DEFENSES WERE EXPECTED TO BE ENHANCED. WE SPOTTED LT GENERAL AMNAD DAMRIGAH, CG FIRST ARMY, INVESTIGATING THE DAMAGE BUT THERE WAS NO OBVIOUS OTHER SIGN OF MILITARY PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY MAY 1.

4. RTG MILITARY SPOKESMAN HAVE DESCRIBED MOTIVATION FOR ATTACKS AS A DESIRE BY CAMBODIANS TO FRIGHTEN VILLAGERS AWAY FROM THE DISTRICT, WHICH HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF ATTACK FOR OVER A YEAR, TO CREATE A NO-MAN'S LAND ON THE FRONTIER. OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO SEAL THE BORDER AND PREVENT CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FOR ESCAPING AND TO HALT BORDER CROSSING BY KHMER RESISTANCE FORCES WHICH HAVE OPERATED FROM THE THAI SIDE OF THE BORDER. HOWEVER, WE HAVE HEARD
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INDIRECTLY THAT THE RTG HAS PUT KHMER RESISTANCES FORCES IN ARANYAPRATHET UNDER WRAPS UNTIL A VISIT TO BANGKOK BY CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PM IENG SARY, EXPECTED PERHAPS NEXT WEEK.

5. PM KRIANGSAK TOLD THE PRESS APRIL 30 THAT THE SHELLING APRIL 29 WOULD NOT RPT NOT AFFECT A VISIT BY IENG SARY. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THAI MILITARY FORCES NOW HAVE STANDING ORDERS TO RETALIATE AGAINST KHMER ATTACKS.

6. COMMENT: SATURDAY'S ATTACKS WERE THE MOST SERIOUS MILITARILY IN SEVERAL MONTHS. WE ASSUME THAT MOTIVATION INCLUDED SOME MIX OF A CAMBODIAN DESIRE TO FRIGHTEN FRONTIER VILLAGERS AND THEREBY CREATE A NO-MAN'S LAND; (B) REACTION TO THAI SUPPORT FOR THE KHMER SEREI (RESISTANCE); AND (C) PERHAPS GENERAL RETALIATION FOR THAI OR RESISTANCE MILITARY ACTIVITIES SOMEWHERE ALONG THE BORDER. THAI OFFICIALS HAVE HINTED THAT THE LATTER MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MOTIVATION FOR THE ATTACKS SATURDAY.

7. WE HAVE NOT RPT NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM A DATE FOR THE IENG SARY VISIT, BUT MFA STILL HOPES THAT AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED WITH SARY, WHEREBY THAI SUPPORT FOR THE CAMBODIAN

RESISTANCE CAN BE STOPPED IN EXCHANGE FOR CESSATION OF KHMER
SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY THAI (CPT). ALTHOUGH THERE
MIGHT BE SOME IMPROVEMENT ON THIS SCORE, WE DOUBT THAT
PHNOM PENH WILL END SUPPORT FOR ITS IDEOLOGICAL ALLIES,
THE CPT, EVEN THOUGH OTHER FACETS OF THAI-CAMBODIAN
RELATIONS MIGHT IMPROVE.
WHITEHOUSE

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